

Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) Program

Testimony submitted by Gerard P. Lynch, Esquire, Chief Executive Officer

For more than 30 years, the **Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) Program** has been a leader in developing the necessary tools and providing critical services for law enforcement as well as other criminal justice and public sector entities. RISS consists of six regional centers that support and serve the unique needs of their individual regions while working together on national-scope issues. RISS is a premier information sharing program, offering secure communications, access to intelligence databases, and investigative resources and services. **The RISS Program respectfully requests that Congress appropriate \$65 million for FY2011.**

As the economy continues to struggle, local and state criminal justice agencies are tightening budgets, decreasing resources, and limiting efforts. RISS serves as a force multiplier, offering a one-stop shop to effectively and efficiently aid agencies in tackling crime problems. **Through RISS services, criminal justice agencies are provided secure information sharing capabilities and investigative support services that, in many cases, they would not otherwise receive.**

The RISS Centers provide investigative support services to more than **96,000** officers from more than **8,500** criminal justice agencies at the local, state, federal, and tribal levels. RISS operates in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, Australia, Canada, and England. RISS links thousands of criminal justice agencies through secure communications and provides information sharing resources and investigative support to combat multijurisdictional crimes, including violent crime, gang activity, drug activity, terrorism, human trafficking, identity theft, and other regional priorities. RISS strives to enhance the ability of criminal justice agencies to identify, target, and remove criminal conspiracies and activities while promoting officer safety.

The support provided by RISS has enabled law enforcement and public safety agencies to increase their success exponentially. Because of these successes, as well as the many remaining needs throughout the criminal justice community, RISS continues to experience an increased demand for its services. Continued and additional funding is needed in order to meet this demand and continue to build upon the nation's information sharing environment. In addition to continuing its current services, RISS will utilize requested funds for the initiatives listed below.

- Expand and continue to deploy the **RISS Officer Safety Event Deconfliction System (RISSafe)** throughout the six RISS regions.
- Enhance the **RISSGang Program**, develop gang training and publications, and connect gang intelligence systems.
- Enhance the RISS Secure Intranet (**RISSNET**) to improve functionality, security, and resources and to expand agency connectivity and officer/agent access.
- Support **border initiatives** by developing training and providing secure information sharing.
- Continue to develop and enhance the **Combat Meth Project**.
- Expand the **RISS Automated Trusted Information Exchange (RISS ATIX)** by enhancing communications and developing an off-line notification and alert capability.
- Expand the **Pawnshop Database** nationwide.
- Continue to participate in the **Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative (NSI)**.

- Continue to support and expand **fusion center** partnerships and connectivity.

RISS is federally funded but locally managed by its member agencies. The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, administers the RISS Program. The RISS Centers operate under the BJA *Funding and Administration Guidelines of the RISS Program* and the Criminal Intelligence Systems Operating Policies (28 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 23). Each of the six RISS Centers has developed operating policies and procedures that comply with the federal guidelines and regulations. RISS firmly recognizes the need to ensure that an individual's constitutional rights, civil liberties, civil rights, and privacy interests are protected throughout the intelligence process. The RISS Centers have adopted a privacy policy that fully complies with 28 CFR Part 23. RISS strongly encourages its member agencies and, indeed, all law enforcement agencies to voluntarily adopt appropriate and clearly defined privacy and security safeguards for all agency intelligence missions to manage and control collection, retention, and dissemination activities.

RISS developed and continues to operate RISSNET, which offers state-of-the-art technology to support law enforcement demand for rapid communications and information sharing nationwide. Through RISSNET, member agencies can securely exchange information and electronically access RISSNET resources, including the RISS Criminal Intelligence Databases (RISSIntel), RISSafe, the RISSGang Program, RISS ATIX, the RISS Investigative Leads Bulletin Board (RISSLeads), a data-visualization and link-analysis tool (RISSLinks), the RISS Search Engine (RISSearch), the RISS Center Web sites, and secure e-mail.

In FY2009, more than **3.4 million records** were available in RISSIntel and more than **3.1 million inquiries** were made to the system. Users utilize RISSIntel to query on suspected criminal information, such as subjects, weapons, and addresses. RISSIntel has proved a successful tool to securely share criminal intelligence and connect law enforcement officers. During 2009, RISS launched RISS7, which leverages RISS's technology by offering law enforcement agencies an autonomous criminal intelligence database. By utilizing RISS7, agencies do not need to develop new independent systems, thereby saving time and resources.

In addition to the data available in RISSIntel, member agencies have access to various state, regional, federal, and specialized criminal justice intelligence systems connected to RISSNET. RISS continually strives to maximize information sharing among these systems and increase the number of systems connected to RISSNET. By connecting agencies and systems to RISSNET, rather than funding the build-out of infrastructure for new stand-alone information systems, hundreds of millions of dollars can be saved and millions of data records can be easily and quickly accessed by law enforcement at little or no cost to the user. In addition, RISS offers the ability to select one or all connected systems and conduct a federated search. This seamless capability has been beneficial to officers on the street who need immediate information.

Currently, almost **100** agency systems are connected or pending connection to RISSNET, including **32** High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs), **36** state agency systems, and **28** federal and other systems, such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Law Enforcement Online (LEO); the FBI National Gang Intelligence Center; the National Virtual Pointer System (NVPS); and Nlets—The International Justice and Public Safety Network.

Every day, law enforcement officers risk their lives serving and protecting their communities. As part of the continued commitment to promote and enhance officer safety, RISS deployed **RISSafe**. RISSafe stores and maintains data on planned law enforcement events, with the goal of identifying and alerting affected agencies and officers of potential conflicts impacting law enforcement efforts. As of January 22, 2010, **152,265 events** were entered into RISSafe, resulting in **52,469 identified conflicts**. Without this resource, law enforcement agencies might have interfered with each other's cases and officers might have been injured or killed.

The **RISSGang Program** is a comprehensive investigative tool consisting of a criminal intelligence database, a Web site, informational resources, and secure communications to aid and support gang-related investigations. The RISSGang database provides law enforcement agencies with access to gang information, including suspects, organizations, weapons, locations, and vehicles, as well as visual imagery of gang members, symbols, tattoos, and graffiti. The RISSGang Web site contains valuable information, research, and tools, including an anonymizing filter that removes the ability of target gang Web sites to identify officers.

RISS ATIX is available to thousands of law enforcement and public safety agencies. RISS ATIX Participants choose a community group according to their responsibilities. ATIX community groups include local, county, state, and tribal levels of emergency management, law enforcement, and government, as well as public and private utilities, transportation, chemical manufacturing, environmental protection, banking, and hospitality industries. RISS ATIX resources include **Web pages** that contain general and community-specific information, links to restricted and public Web sites, and other sources of terrorism and disaster-related information. The RISS ATIX **Bulletin Board** provides secure online conferences for users to collaborate and post information. The **Document Library** provides informational and educational materials. ATIX **secure e-mail** enables the distribution of alerts and sensitive but unclassified (SBU)/controlled unclassified information (CUI).

Some law enforcement agencies do not have the personnel, training, or support to tackle complex multijurisdictional crimes. RISS not only provides secure communications and access to intelligence databases but also provides services to enhance and improve the ability to detect, apprehend, and successfully prosecute criminals. These services, along with the power of RISSNET, set RISS apart from other information sharing programs. The following summarizes RISS's information and investigative support services.

- **Information Sharing**—RISS operates RISSNET and its various applications, databases, and investigative tools.
- **Analysis**—RISS analysts developed **35,655 analytical products** in FY2009 for investigators and prosecutors to help increase their ability to identify, detect, and apprehend suspects as well as enhance prosecutorial success in court. These products include flowcharts, link-analysis charts, crime scene diagrams, telephone toll analysis and financial analysis reports, digital forensics analysis, and audiovisual enhancement services.
- **Investigative Support**—RISS intelligence research staff responded to **96,293 requests** in FY2009 to conduct database searches and research numerous resources.
- **Equipment Loans**—Pools of highly specialized investigative and surveillance equipment are available for loan to member agencies for use in support of multijurisdictional investigations. In FY2009, **5,669 pieces of equipment** were borrowed by member agencies.

- **Confidential Funds**—RISS provides funds to purchase contraband, stolen property, and other items of an evidentiary nature or to provide for other investigative expenses. RISS provided **\$664,785 in confidential funds** in FY2009.
- **Training**—RISS Centers sponsor or cosponsor training classes, meetings, and conferences that build investigative expertise for member agency personnel. In FY2009, **78,852 criminal justice professionals** received RISS training.
- **Publications**—Each center develops and distributes numerous publications, bulletins, and reports focusing on local and national issues. In FY2009, the RISS Centers distributed **255,798 copies** of various documents to law enforcement personnel. RISS also distributes a quarterly newsletter that provides project highlights and member agency success stories.
- **Field Services Support**—The integration of field services is unique to RISS, whereby individuals regularly contact law enforcement and public safety agencies to ensure that RISS is meeting their needs. RISS field staff conducted **25,242 on-site visits** in FY2009 to train, support, and help integrate RISS services. This one-on-one support has resulted in trusted relationships and a program prized among its members.

Through the services and support provided by the RISS Centers, member agencies made **4,975 arrests** in FY2009. In addition, seizures or recoveries of more than **\$27 million in narcotics, property, and currency** resulted from member agency cases in which RISS services were used.

RISS continues pursuing and refining partnerships and programs in order to leverage proven technology and expand information sharing. Some of these include connecting fusion centers to RISSNET, supporting NSI, participating in the NVPS, enhancing gang investigators' ability to share intelligence data, and expanding the capabilities and resources of RISS ATIX.

The *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan* (NCISP) and the Law Enforcement Information Sharing Program (LEISP) Strategy were developed to focus on national parameters for information and intelligence sharing. RISS is noted in both documents as a mechanism to facilitate secure information sharing. In addition, the *National Strategy for Information Sharing* (NSIS) calls for information and intelligence sharing solutions that can be accomplished through the existing RISSNET infrastructure; specifically, RISS has worked with other agencies and systems to provide connectivity and access to suspicious activity reporting data.

There is a critical need to provide a seamless SBU/CUI solution for the local, state, and tribal communities. Multiple SBU/CUI networks, portals, and systems currently exist. Local law enforcement officers/analysts need one single sign-on and access to an interoperable SBU/CUI environment, regardless of ownership. To accomplish this, interoperability requirements must be defined. RISS and RISSNET—along with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Homeland Security Information Network, FBI LEO, and the Intelligence Communities' Intelink—have been identified by the Interagency Policy Committee (IPC) formed within the jurisdiction of the Executive Office of the President as the four SBU/CUI networks necessary to be involved in the interoperability initiative to ensure timely and effective information sharing among local, state, federal, and tribal agencies. RISS will play a major role in this development process.

RISS has made strides in this area, through the LEISP initiatives, to connect users via Federated Identity to the federal Joint Automated Booking System (JABS). Currently, 89 RISSNET users

are accessing JABS via Federated Identity, and 1,756 non-RISSNET users are accessing RISS resources via Federated Identity.

In addition to the partnerships described above, each RISS Center has developed partnerships and programs to meet the needs of its unique region. Some examples include the Project Safe Neighborhoods Mapping and Analysis Program, the National Identity Crimes Law Enforcement Network, the Cold Case Locator System, the Metals Theft Initiative, the Master Telephone Index, the Pawnshop Database, the Combat Meth Project, and the Cold Hit Outcome Project.

RISS is supported and endorsed by numerous groups, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the National Narcotic Officers' Associations' Coalition, and the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations.

Without continued funding and support for RISS, law enforcement and public safety efforts will be severely hampered. Specifically, RISS and its users will experience the following:

- Reduced expansion of RISSafe, including the number of users and establishment of additional RISSafe Watch Centers
- Inability to effectively support RISS ATIX and RISSGang
- Limited expansion of RISSNET and redundancy of system applications
- Minimal enhancement of the RISSNET Portal
- Limited support for border initiatives
- No expansion of the Pawnshop Database
- Decreased support services, limited analytical support, and fewer training opportunities
- Delayed and/or a lack of new connectivity among agencies and users
- Limited support for information sharing initiatives

It is respectfully requested that Congress appropriate \$65 million for FY2011 to continue RISS's efforts. Local and state law enforcement depend on RISS for information sharing, investigative support, and technical assistance and are increasingly competing for decreasing budget resources. It would be counterproductive to require local and state RISS members to self-fund match requirements, as well as to reduce the amount of BJA discretionary funding. Local and state agencies require more, not less, funding to fight the nation's crime problem. RISS is unable to make up the decrease in funding that a match would cause, and it has no revenue source of its own. Cutting the RISS appropriation by requiring a match should not be imposed on the program.

RISS operates one of the most important law enforcement information sharing programs in the nation. The services and resources available through RISS embody collaboration, trust, service, and leadership. RISS plays a part in ensuring that law enforcement and public safety have the information and resources necessary to secure our country. For additional information, please visit www.riss.net. RISS appreciates the support this committee has continuously provided to the RISS Program and is grateful to provide this testimony.